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STEWARDSHIP

A Brief Course of Lectures

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FOREWORD.

THIS brief course of Lectures has been delivered to several classes of Seminary and Bible School students during the course of their preparation for work in the Master's service. At the instance of several requests they are now being published. The author acknowledges their limitations. They are not intended to cover the subject in its wide implications. The Lectures present the subject from the point of view of a study of the Bible. He trusts that they will enable followers of Christ to enter into a deeper appreciation of the Christian attitude, to a deeper consecration of personality, time and property in the fulfilment of God's great purpose for His children, and to stimulate them to further study.

KILPAUK, MADRAS.

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STEWARDSHIP

CHAPTER I

Man as God's Steward ; Himself and His Position in Nature.

THE Bible is unique both in the manner in which it regards man in his relation to God and in the manner in which man's relation to the world of material things is set forth. Man is neither a being who is absolutely free to do with himself and the world of nature as he pleases, nor is he a mere automaton placed in the world of nature and forced of necessity to do everything in a set plan, not having any freedom whatever. He has a measure of freedom, but that freedom is placed within certain prescribed limits, within which bounds he is to exercise his powers. Further the Bible teaches that if man exercises his stewardship with its limited powers in the right way, his freedom will be increased and he will then be allowed to exercise his powers in an ever-widening range of bounds, until boundaries can be dispensed with entirely, and he becomes a son of God, having freedom such as God Himself has.

1. Man Himself. Study Psalm viii

The writers of the Old Testament were impressed by two views of man. These are briefly summarized in Psalm viii. (1) From the point of view of the great world of nature and of the stars and the movements of the heavenly bodies man seemed a mere atom, having such an insignificant place in the universe that his efforts amounted to nothing. All went on without any effort of his, and whatever he did had no influence on the orderly courses of the heavenly bodies, or on the Rita (regular onflow) of the seasons or of the rivers. What is man, that God is mindful of him? He seems no

more than an insignificant part of the great wheel of the universe. Is not his freedom a delusion? (2) But then man has a very exalted position. God has made him but little lower than Himself. There are great areas of nature over which God has placed man as a ruler and a steward. He has much freedom, and not only can control, but is responsible for, the development of himself as well as these areas of nature. It is true his freedom has bounds, but it also has a wide area in which it is to be exercised.

With regard to man himself—the Bible does not regard his being on this earth as an accident, nor does it regard God as having been forced to put him here. God created man and this creation was a free act of God and not a matter of compulsion. God, out of his great love, wanted man, and hence made him. As a father must care for his children so God regarded the care of man as an obligation upon Himself, and as a child is responsible to his father so God regards men as responsible to Himself. This is the first ground of stewardship. Man is not his own—a self-created being. God made him, and he is responsible to God, and God cares for him. This we see in the Biblical account of the early history of man.

After God selected the people of Israel as a special means of imparting His training to men Israel still belonged to God and was responsible to Him. But the ground of this stewardship changed. It was no longer based entirely on the fact that God made man but also on the fact that God had redeemed him. He had bought man for a price. This redeeming of Israel by God began first with the redemption from Egypt, effected not by the power of Israel, but rather by God. It was a marvellous thing—that this people in subjection in a foreign country, without military arms, and apparently in the most abject slavery, should suddenly gain freedom. Israel counted herself as having been redeemed by God and certainly she was right. The

Israelites belonged to God because He had redeemed them. This idea was one which remained prominent in the religious thought of the Israelites all through their history. They saw God's redemption of them in numerous ways in subsequent history. They were often saved, not through any cleverness or strength of their own, but providentially. Hosea saw Israel in this light, and he was brought to a vivid realization of its meaning through the affairs of his own family. They were again brought to a full realization of this fact by their release from captivity in Babylon, brought about, not through anything they did themselves, but in a manner that was nothing short of miraculous, even though we can easily understand now how it took place. That does not detract from its miraculous character.

So Israel thought of man as belonging to God. This was so not only through God's creating man but even more so through God's redeeming him. God's love to man, and the great claims that God had on man, were made increasingly apparent through this redemption. And it was in the light of this that New Testament writers were able to interpret man's view of himself and his freedom. Jesus Christ died to redeem man from his sin. Man was not his own. He was purchased, he was ransomed by God, and therefore his first responsibility was to God, to whom he owed any freedom that he might have. But in Jesus Christ national boundaries were eclipsed, for Jesus Christ died for all men and therefore He has the same claim on all men that the God of the Old Testament had on Israel. But there was a difference. Men were born into Israel by birth and there was a certain measure of divine necessity in belonging to this favoured nation. No man had the power to choose as to whether he would be born in this nation or not, for the place, time, family and nation of birth is beyond man's freedom of choice. But with the coming of Jesus Christ this 'necessity' was removed. Jesus Christ compelled no man to accept Him.

Birth into His kingdom was not determined by man's physical birth. It was given to man to choose whether he desired to be a member of this kingdom or not. Every man was placed automatically in a position where he had to choose one of two alternatives. He must be either for or against. He could either choose Jesus Christ and the redemption and freedom which He gives, or he might choose to run his own course as he would, regarding himself as sufficient and as his own God. According to the teaching of Christianity the former choice would result in greater freedom and in a fellowship of friendship with God until finally, God would give the individual 'sonship to Himself'; the latter choice would lead man to defeat because of his own inadequacy, for he would run his course falling into sin and selfishness which would lead to an increasing slavery and restriction of freedom.

Therefore, according to the Christian message, no man is his own. Paul enunciates the Christian view with clarity. 'What?' he says, 'know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.' (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). Again in the Epistle to the Romans he writes, 'For none of us liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: Whether we live, therefore, or die, *We are the Lord's.*' (Rom. xiv. 7, 8). Jesus Christ died for all men and paid the price for all, whether they accept or not. Whatever any man does is done within the limits of a freedom which God grants. Every man lives and works under the supervision of God. Man belongs to God. His body with all its faculties, his mind and intellect, his soul and his whole personality, are God's, because God has redeemed them. Therefore if man uses them as if they are his own, he really

steals them, and flings the redemption effected by God back into the very face of God. He denounces God and His love and will have none of it. But if a man accepts the redemption effected and offered by God, then he acknowledges that all his faculties belong to God. They are given to God and God gives them back to man to be used in accordance with His divine will and plan. This applies not only to man's faculties but even to his children. This explains one aspect of the Christian sacrament of baptism. Christian parents give their children to God and, according to the sacred ceremony, God gives the children back to the parents and they are under the duty of stewardship to bring them up in the realization of the redemption which the Lord has effected for them, and to teach them His will and His divine plan. It applies to everything that a Christian is or does. He dedicates all to God and uses all as God's trust to him.

2. Man and Property. Study Leviticus XXV

It has been said that the members of the human race, regardless of religion, creed and nationality, act in the present age as if there were either no God at all, or as if God were an impersonal Being,—lifeless, without mind or purpose, who had no interest or control in the world. This statement is made on the basis of man's relation to nature and property. Men act as if the world and everything connected with it was theirs alone. There is no sense of stewardship under the dispensation of God as the supreme creator, owner, and ruler of all things. Instead of all being God's, all is rather man's, and man considers himself as God. Perhaps few men would openly say this, but this is the conclusion that one must draw, judging from the manner in which most men regard property and possessions.

Certainly this is not the view of man's relation to physical possessions which is set forth in the Bible. In the Old Testament it is stated repeatedly that the earth is the Lord's,

and all the fulness thereof. Land belongs to God. Cattle and all property are likewise God's. According to Mosaic Law certain portions of the land were apportioned to various people and families. These portions might be sold but not in perpetuity. After fifty years there was to be a complete readjustment and the possessions which the family of one generation amassed were not to pass on to another generation. This view of land ownership is unique in the annals of the world. Property, according to this view, is meant for use and not for power. The trouble with a religion of an impersonal God is that property is regarded as a means of power. A family amasses far more property than they can use, passing it on to the next generation. These use it to control and make other men their slaves thereby restricting men's freedom. Worth is expressed in terms of property and not in terms of men. Property becomes of more value than men. This seems to have been the reason underlying the Old Testament law. But this law was something which the people of the Old Testament did not carry out in execution. The prophets complain again and again about the manner in which the rich gained more and more land and reduced the common people to the position of serfs. Even kings showed no respect for the right of the poor man whose land they might want for private purposes. The whole nation became land and possession greedy and made conquest in an attempt to take the land of other nations. How different this ideal was from that which God intended according to Isaiah's picture of the ideal (Chaps. ii-v). Society was permeated with greed, jealousy and envy, and man fought with his brother. Certainly Francis of Assisi was at least partially right when he concluded that the root of much of the world's trouble lies in the possession of things—in property. He took an extreme view but he was right from the point of view of the Bible in so far as all property is there held to belong to God and that only stewardship is granted

to men. No man owns any property outright. God holds ultimate possession of everything even of the life of man himself and of his children. And only a fool can deny this.

That God is the ultimate possessor of all property, and that all men, whoever they might be, are merely stewards, is the view set forth consistently in the New Testament, and consequently, this is the view of Christianity. Christians, especially those who are prosperous, are apt to forget this. There is always the danger that men, swelled with the pride of their own achievements, may think of themselves as producers, forgetting that without the basic gifts of God and without the increase which He gives there would be no such thing as production at all. Thus Jesus set forth the parable of the rich fool, who boasted of his property possessions and built greater barns and who was brought so quickly to face the limitations of his stewardship and called into account. 'No man', says Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, 'can serve two Masters.' 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon' and mammon means selfish greed for possessions. We must either be God's stewards and serve Him or we will serve greed and self-seeking.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Read John iii. 1-15. What is Nicodemus' conception of his supposed privilege of having been born a Jew? What is Jesus' view?
2. Read John iii. 16-21. It is said in these verses that 'believing' determines whether or not a man makes himself a steward of God. In view of vv. 20, 21 what would you say 'believing' includes?
3. Study the 25th Chapter of Leviticus and outline the chief points in the Mosaic system of property tenure.
4. Read the prophecy of Micah. Write out answers to the following questions :—
 - (a) What were the economic conditions of the various classes of people?
 - (b) How did teachers and preachers become instruments in such injustice?
 - (c) What effects did this produce in the worship of the people?

5. Read the prophecy of Amos. Write answers to the following questions :—

- (a) What were the transgressions of Israel ?
- (b) How did God regard their religious ceremonies ?
- (c) What is said about the futility of waiting for the Day of Jehovah and what do you understand by this ?

ADVANCED STUDY

6. Compare the Biblical view of man's freedom in the world of Nature with that of the Gita ?

7. An eminent modern scientist writes along the following lines :—

‘ Either the aspirations and moral nature of men have evolved like the scales of a fish from cold physical laws or there is a conscious purpose behind it all and if such a purpose it has a moral significance. That significance and the moral completeness it implies involve Immortality. Of course I cannot demonstrate this to the satisfaction of others, but it is the faith I live by and I have never heard any different philosophy that gives me a faith I can live by. Without it I can conform to traditional rules of conduct but I cannot see a true reason for what I try to do beside conventionality. Without it, therefore, there is to me no real meaning or vital force in life.’

From the point of view of such a scientist, and there are many such, answer the following questions :—

- (a) What is the conception of God ?
- (b) What is the conception of man's stewardship to God ?

CHAPTER II.

How God Views Man's Stewardship.

BEFORE proceeding to study the Christian view of stewardship from the point of view of man it is advisable to look at the matter first from the point of view of God. Three parables related by our Lord are of peculiar interest in this connection. In these parables we are able to gain an insight into the manner in which God looks upon the worker, how He appraises his work, how He looks upon ability and zeal

and quantity of work done, and, finally, the great value which He attaches to working with the right motive.

1. Read carefully Luke xix. 12-28. Quantity of Work Done.

In this parable the whole emphasis is upon the quantity of the work done. The fact that different men have different abilities, the fact that some men are given more and some less, is not taken into the scope of this parable at all. Each and every one of the servants receive exactly the same amount. It is taken for granted that all have an equal amount of ability and that all have the same opportunity and scope to use it. The whole emphasis falls upon the quantity of gain, the amount which they can gain through the use of what has been given. The parable is put in terms of money and trade. Each is commanded to do business with the amount of capital given. The master goes away. Thus he gives each man a wide range of freedom. Each may use his own judgment, his own initiative, and work according to his own methods. It is in the estimate which the master puts on each man's work upon his return that we see one of the great principles which govern God's way of judging. Three examples are set forth in the parable. The first servant, in addition to the original mina given, has gained ten other minæ. A second steward has gained five minæ over and above his original capital. Seeing that both started with the same capital to begin with the question arises, 'Is there any difference in the manner in which the master evaluates their worth?' There is. The first steward is highly commended. The master says 'Well done, you excellent servant; because you have done so well with this trifle, you are placed in authority over ten cities.' Notice carefully, however, the master's words to the second steward. Some translations of the Bible lead one to think that he said the same thing to the second servant that he did to the first. Such translations are misleading. Moffatt is much more accurate in his translation.

He renders v. 19 as follows: 'To him he said, "And you are set over five towns."' There is no word of commendation at all. In fact the promotion is made casually and rather dryly. It is quite obvious, from the master's remarks, that the man has not done as much as he might. He was a man of ability equal to that of the first servant; he had been given exactly the same capital to use and he had the same opportunities. But either he was not as zealous, or he failed to use the full potentialities of some of his opportunities or time, or he did not use the same good judgment. Certainly he was not entirely inactive and lazy, nor did he have that grudging and spiteful disposition which was manifest in the case of the third servant. Nevertheless he had not done his best. Such stewardship is not without some reward but it does not receive the highest. Moreover when the one mina is taken away from the servant who had made no gain it is given to the servant who had gained ten minæ. Throughout this parable the emphasis is on quantity. Here Jesus shows that God does value quantity and that quantity is a factor in how God views man's stewardship when all other things are equal.

2. Read carefully Matt. xxv. 14-30. Unequal Abilities.

In this parable the emphasis shifts. The emphasis is not on quantity, but rather on the manner in which God recognizes unequal abilities in men and gives them accordingly and judges men in accordance with the use they have made of their ability. The ability of the three stewards is different and the number of talents given to each varies in proportion. To one is given five talents, to the second two, and to the third only one, and, continues the parable, to each was given 'according to his several ability.' In the same manner as in the previous parable the master goes away, giving the various stewards freedom to use the capital as

they will. Again, as in the first parable, it is when the master returns that a reckoning was made. In the case of the first two stewards it is to be noted that each gained exactly the same in proportion to their ability and the amount given,—the first gaining five talents and the second two. Each did equally well from the point of view of ability and capital. It is fitting that the master should commend each in precisely the same way. In each case he says 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Nothing is said of the one being placed over five cities and the other over two. Both are rewarded equally. This is just and fair. Given equal ability and equal capital certainly quantity does count. But given unequal ability and capital, quantity should not be the sole standard of judgment. God takes these things into account. This parable is true to life. In it we see how God views the inequalities of life. The lesson is that from him to whom much is given much is expected. The whole teaching of Jesus corroborates this. Jesus turns to the Jewish city of Capernaum and says it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for it. The Jews had received much but were selfish and grudging and did not use their opportunities. In the present day this would apply to many Christians. It would apply to many non-Christians as well. The master takes all things into account. He is fair and just and the principles upon which he makes his judgments apply to all in a fair and just manner.

3. Read carefully Matt. xx. 1-16. The Quality of the Work Done.

Observe carefully that 'quantity of work done' has very little place in this parable. All of the servants worked but the quantity of work done and the length of time worked

are entirely disregarded in the final settlement. Observe also that the abilities of the various workers receive no place in the parable. Two classes of workers are depicted. The first class come early, make a definite bargain to work for a specified sum, and proceed to work, working throughout the entire day according to the terms of their contract. The second class come late,—some very late. They apparently realize that they have no right to bargain and make no attempt. They accept the master's command, go into the vineyard to work, leaving the matter of payment entirely in the hands of the master, trusting to his justice and benevolence. The calculating, self-complacent, hireling spirit of the first class is clearly seen at the time of payment. Such a spirit is manifest in the Pharisees, with their careful tithing of even the minutest curry stuffs. It is manifest in those who have the self-righteous and self-sufficient spirit and strive to merit heaven's rewards. The master deals with them in their own terms and pays them exactly that which the contract calls for. But God does not allow their conceptions of justice to limit His kindness and love. God is not bound by a precise law of karma. Personality is higher than impersonal law. In God's divine economy there is a place for forgiveness and the wiping out of past debts. On the other hand God is not a doting and capricious father, giving to his children promiscuously or through favouritism. He calls men *to work* in His vineyard. One hour's work done in the right spirit, without any effort to make a bargain with God, is of greater value than a full day's work done with the hireling spirit.

The two classes of workers are typified in the parable of the Prodigal Son in the attitudes of the older and younger brothers. When the prodigal came to himself and returned to beg work as a servant the father received him as a son. He now had the disposition of a true son. He realized he owed everything to his father consequently his attitude was

that of humility, teachableness and the consciousness of his responsibility to his father. As to the older brother, although he had pursued his stewardship from selfish motives, nevertheless he is not punished. He has to learn to his disappointment, however, that the father does not regard him as having earned all that has been left. The father rightly regards it as his own and he does with it as he wills. God is just and fair but he will not allow the ungenerous and hard hearted disposition of hirelings to limit His mercy and love. God values the whole-hearted giving of a Mary Magdalene, or the devotion of a widow who gives two mites, far more than the cold and calculating giving of a Pharisee who tries to drive a bargain with Him. And after all is said and done God's part in stewardship is so much greater than man's that no man can claim to be a profitable steward. Our best is still less than it ought to be. The bargain-driving type of steward is not without his reward but he is doomed to disappointment. Jesus said even to his disciples that 'many of the last shall be first and the first last'. (Matt. xix. 30). The hard, calculating spirit is never heroic. It does not know how to appreciate the spirit of uncalculating sacrifice which never asks the price,—which gives everything,—even life itself, out of love and gratitude. The calculating spirit looks on the breaking of an alabaster cruse as waste. On the other hand Jesus values the heroic spirit. It is of the highest quality. It never looks to reward,—it gives its very best, leaving rewards in God's hands. Moreover we cannot regard God's attitude as capricious. In God's sight many of the things which we deem important are not so and many of the things which we are inclined to view as little God deems important. Then, too, we must remember that God looks on the heart and gives regard to the motives and the spirit in which stewardship is rendered. It is the motive that lends quality to the stewardship, and quality is more valuable than quantity.

Of course these three parables do not bring out all the facts regarding how God views man's stewardship. One question which arises is 'Are all men to be regarded as God's stewards, or only certain special men?' When we examine Jesus' teaching for an answer to this question we are not left in doubt. Jesus says that the man who does not recognize the fact that absolute ownership of all that a man has, even of his own body and life, belongs to God, and that every man is a steward of God, is a fool. Certainly God regards all men as stewards whether they acknowledge the fact or not. Consequently the only sensible thing to do is frankly to recognize our limitations and the terms and conditions under which life in this world is to be regarded. We need also to recognize that, although God has given man much freedom, still it is God who imposes certain conditions upon His stewards, and does not allow them to dictate conditions to Him. Having the freedom in the world that we do have, it is very easy to deceive ourselves. We may acknowledge our stewardship with our mouths, or we may even go so far as to fool ourselves into thinking that we are really acting as God's stewards, and yet, at the same time, assume that we can dictate to God. Such men are depicted in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, which Jesus clearly directs against the religious leaders of the Jews. (Matt. xxi. 33-44). These had dictated to Israel so long that they grew to think that they could dictate to God also. The danger applies not only to those in high positions, whether in Church, State, or elsewhere, but to everyone, even the humblest. The poorest cooly is often extremely dictatorial in his own sphere.

Likewise, there is no refusing to acknowledge our stewardship to God. Everyone has received something. Often it is those who have received the least who become mean in spirit. But God does not accept any such refusal. He deals with such in His own way. Everyone is held accountable.

Among those who examine this picture of 'How God Views Man's Stewardship?' there will possibly be some who will raise objections. They will not like the arbitrariness of God. They will say, 'Is not God unfair and unjust in forcing upon us His own conditions? Does not God override the demands of responsible personality and make men His abject slaves? Are we not forced to agree, and does not such force place our whole relationship to Him under a shadow?' Certainly such an attitude is possible, and there is little that can be said to one who assumes it. It is much the same as that taken by the Prodigal Son when he was led to sever his relations with his father. He was allowed to take that which he considered his own and to depart to follow his own plans. Through bitter experience he learned that his first attitude was wrong. His father was not an unjust and irksome taskmaster, but rather a kind and loving parent who knew far more than the son. No doubt before he first left his father that parent had tried to convince him by argument and otherwise. But no argument could bring about that changed conception of his father. It had to come by experience, and by the realization not only of his own limitations but of his father's wisdom and loving care. We see the same thing in the treatment which Ambrose meted out to his spiritual child Augustine. Augustine came with argument. After seeing his attitude of mind Ambrose refused to argue further with him. As long as Augustine refused to accept the limitations placed upon him by God argument was useless. After Augustine came to himself he realised the wisdom of Ambrose's treatment. Questions such as 'Why did not God create us all equal?' and 'Why does God allow sin and imperfection to exist in the world?' are, in the last analysis, a failure to accept our stewardship, and a doubting of God's wisdom and love. The discussion of such questions is futile. Religion must adopt essentially the same procedure as does science. Just as the chemist

starts with certain basic elements, such as oxygen, carbon, etc., which he cannot explain, and works with these, so religion must start with certain foundation principles. These foundation principles must be tested and tried by the experience of life. The foundation principles of Christianity are stated quite plainly in the first and second chapters of the First Epistle of John. These are as follows: (1) 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all,' that is, God is perfectly worthy of man's trust, and is ever ready and even anxious to help man in every possible way in his development. If man is to believe, trust and rely on God at all he must accept God as reliable. (2) Man must accept his own limitations and co-operate with God in his growth Godward. (3) Man must acknowledge that he has a measure of freedom and must accept responsibility for the freedom of choice and action which he possesses. Man dare not declare that all is of God and that God is responsible for all, for, as is stated plainly in the Epistle, there is that in the world which is not of the Father, but of the world. (1 John ii. 16, 17). The very fact that man has a measure of freedom denotes that he has a measure of creative ability and that he can create something himself. God may or may not own responsibility for this something, just the same as an earthly father may or may not be responsible for certain actions of his son.

Recognizing the fact that all men are stewards of God we see in the second parable how we must also recognize the fact that all men are not equal, either in ability or in what is entrusted to them for use. Some have more, some have less. God recognizes that. But responsibility is the same in every case. It is not the amount that counts. Jesus states quite clearly the principle along which God looks on each man's responsibility. 'He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much.' (Luke xvi. 10). It is true that

this saying of Jesus appears in connection with money and property ; but it is also true, as we shall see, that man's stewardship covers things far more important than these. The same principle holds when we reflect on the responsibility which is placed on every man for we realize that each one of us has a great and important task, ample for all our powers. It is the scope of stewardship to which we now direct our attention.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. With regard to the last Parable which we studied, viz., (Matt. xx. 1-16), answer the following questions :—

(a) Which, in the opinion of God, is more valuable, property or men ? cf. Matt. xii. 12. What is the use for which property is to be employed ?

(b) Trace the connection between this parable and the teaching that immediately precedes it, viz., (Matt. xix. 13-30). (i) What is the characteristic of the child-like mind ? (ii) In what respects are the motives of the disciples and those of the rich young ruler identical ? (iii) What factors conditioned the minds of the young man as well as the disciples, and what did both most need ?

2. Read Genesis Chaps. xxv. to xxxvi. What type of steward was Jacob ? Describe the characteristics of this type.

3. Read Genesis Chaps. xxii. to xxiv. What type of steward was Abraham ? Describe the characteristics of this type.

4. Compare Jacob and Abraham as stewards.

5. Read Matt. xix. 27-30. What is the great danger of the calculating type of steward ?

6. What is the difference between Peter and Judas in their disposition to yield to the temptation of bargaining with God ? In how far did this temptation affect many of the disciples ?

ADVANCED STUDY

7. Compare Hinduism and Christianity from the point of view of man's stewardship to God. What is the ideal in each case ?

8. From the point of view of man's stewardship what will be the effect of placing a too high value on miracles? When and where do you think a steward might look for an extraordinary manifestation of God's power?

9. What would you say are the relative spheres of grace and merit in God's dealing with men?

10. Read Dr. Hogg's booklet on 'Karma and Redemption.' From what point of view must man approach the question of the responsibility of God.

11. If some men are thoughtful, thrifty, and industrious, and others lazy and indifferent, are not inequalities in life inevitable? May we not say that men, either personally, or hereditarily, or socially, are responsible for the inequalities of life?

CHAPTER III

The Scope of Man's Stewardship

(1) *Personality.*

MAN is a peculiar being. Although most of the organs of his body are not essentially different from those of animals nevertheless man is quite different. We may say that animals come into the world largely complete. Many things they do not seem to have to learn at all. Thus the calf and the little chick do not have to learn how to walk, nor does the little duck have to learn how to swim. Each kind of animal simply is the kind of animal that it is, and has the habits of that kind. Their habits develop without thought or intelligence, and with little variation. With man the case is different. He has to learn. He must be taught. He learns to crawl, then to walk. But he does not limit himself to these. He learns to climb, to jump, and even to swim. Thus while he started with less advantage than the animal he really develops in many more ways. Then too man comes into the world weak and helpless. He has no given weapons of defence or offence. Yet he develops artificial ways which are far more powerful than those of the fiercest

animals. Again there is a difference in their relation to nature. Animals are adapted to nature. But man learns to control wide areas of nature, and changes and harnesses at least some of the forces of nature to suit his wants. He takes fire, of which all animals are afraid, and makes it his servant. But above and beyond all of these peculiarities, there is the ability to objectify himself. He is never satisfied as are animals. He has a sense of 'oughtness' in him. He separates himself from what he has thought or done and says 'I ought to have done better.' The animal just 'is', but with man there is the faculty of self-criticism. He projects some ideal or goal before himself and bends every effort to achieve it. If he achieves it he then replaces it with a still higher goal, and strives for that. Then there is a freedom of self-determination about man which the animal does not have. There is a sense of rightness and wrongness. We may call it moral sense or conscience. It is attached to man's faculty of self-criticism. Some specialists hold that it is innate in man; others say it is developed through social contacts. The fact remains—it is there. Again there is in man a sense of sympathy for others,—a feeling of pity when we see some person or animal in pain or distress,—and an impulse in the heart to give help. Again this faculty may be innate in man, or it may come through heredity, or through contact with others. But the point is that it is in man. All these things are characteristics of that thing which we call personality. They set man off as an unusual creature in the world. When we study and try to analyze it we are baffled. We cannot say it is this thing or that thing. Personality is a something that cannot be divided. Man is a unit. Personality includes all that a man is,—his body, his senses, his mind, his emotions, his will, and his whole soul. It is a something which is given to him,—a responsibility, which is his as an individual. It is a trust from God.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF PERSONALITY

*Study Romans Chap. xii.***1. The Stewardship of the Body. Romans xii. 1.**

St. Paul appeals to us that we should dedicate our 'bodies' as living sacrifices, consecrated and acceptable to God. We owe this to God in virtue of the fact that He has redeemed us through Jesus Christ. Paul uses the word 'body' with the sense that it is the instrument of the soul. It is the instrument through the medium of which all human service is rendered to God. Its service is more than merely physical for it is through the physical body that spiritual service is rendered. The metaphor which Paul uses to set forth the offering up of our bodies to God is one that is borrowed from the primitive offering of animals to God in bloody sacrifice. One sometimes sees in ancient churches paintings which show how artists understood this figure of Paul. In the centre of the painting there is a picture of an ox. On one side of the ox there is a picture of an altar such as was used in Old Testament times for the offering of animals in bloody sacrifice. On the other side there is a picture of a plow,—the instrument to which the ox is yoked for service. A careful study of this chapter of St. Paul's Epistle shows that what the apostle meant was that our bodies are to be offered up as instruments of service—yoked to the plow. We must have the spirit that is willing to offer up our bodies even unto death, but God desires not death, but the stewardship of our bodies in service in life. We are living sacrifices.

Now the body is one of the most important factors in human personality. It is at once a source of great temptation and danger, and, as we have said, it is the instrument through which all service to God in the world is rendered. The body through its desires and appetites is so great a danger to man that many thinkers have been led to regard it

as entirely evil. They have advised man to sever himself from his senses and appetites as far as possible. The only salvation is in the mind, cutting it off from the body, for through the body and the senses and appetites come temptations and desire. This is the view of Hindu thinkers in general. Thus Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita that that man's wisdom is firm who draws his senses in from things of sense on every side, as a tortoise draws in its limbs. When a man ponders on the things of sense, then there springs up attachment to them; of attachment is born desire; of desire is born wrath and so the whole man is ruined. (ii. 57-63). This is the view taken in the Upanishads (See Katha Upan. iii. 3-6). This view has led Hindus to regard the Yogi and the Ascetic as the highest ideal of life. The Stoics of Paul's time looked upon the body in much the same way.

Now there is much truth in this view of the body. No one can deny that the body is a source of great danger. But it is an extreme and hence a wrong view. Fire also is very dangerous, but still man uses it and finds in it one of his best and most useful instruments. Fire is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. So likewise the body is a good servant, but when, through the pampering of its appetites and desires, it dominates a man's personality, then it becomes man's worst enemy. The body needs to be disciplined and kept under control. It must always be an instrument and never a master. Jesus is very definite on this point. The body must be kept under control no matter what the cost. 'If thy right eye, or thy right hand,'—most important organs—'offend thee, cut them off and cast them away, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell.' (Matt. v. 29-30). Paul also frequently warns us against bodily passions and lusts. John also warns against the 'lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the

vainglory of life ' and says these are not of God. But none of these men mean that we are to attempt to cut ourselves off from our bodies, and try to live a life of contemplation entirely outside our bodies. All of them were exceedingly active and used their bodies in service continually. Paul says that he buffets his body and brings it into servitude (1 Cor. ix. 27). That is what Jesus means. We are not to yield to the bodily appetites in the matter of sensuality, or drink, or in any other form of excess. We need to attend to the needs of our body in order that our personalities may be at a maximum of efficiency, but the body is never to dominate. We are to control and discipline our bodies as a runner governs his diet and his sensual appetitse when he is preparing to run a race.

But the body is essentially important to man in two ways. First, the mind and all the faculties of man are somehow are other bound up in the body. To be at his highest efficiency a man must have a healthy body. Sickness, or drink, or excessive eating, or sensuality, not only affects the body but the mind also. They weaken the will and reduce the power to resist and overcome evil. Many people pay too little attention to their bodies. They disregard the intelligent observance of a diet calculated to give the body those elements of nourishment it most needs to keep it at its highest efficiency. They often spend more money for food that they relish even though this food is low in nutritive value than would be necessary for food of higher food value. They do not pay enough attention to exercise and healthy recreation. They often disregard the most elementary rules of sanitation, drinking impure water and imbibing germs which affect not only man's body but his mental powers. Through carelessness and negligence they allow hookworm to get into them, and the efficiency of their whole personalities is reduced. So we see how essential the body is to man's personality. The body is not a mere prison house in which

the soul is kept in captivity. The soul and body are intimately connected, and each influences the other. 'Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own: for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.' (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). Our bodily desires are neither evil nor good. They are instruments just the same as a knife is an instrument. A knife may be put to a right use, as for example, cutting vegetables; or it may be put to a wrong use, as in killing a neighbour. So it is with our appetites and desires. They were given us by God for our use and help. Pain is a warning that something is wrong, and needs our attention. Hunger is a sign that our bodies need nourishment. But desire, which God gave us with good purpose, can be pampered and wrongly used. It needs to be kept subordinate and rightly used. The right and the wrong lies not in desire, but in the will and motive of the man into whose stewardship desire has been entrusted.

The body of man is essentially important in a second way. It is the only means of communication which man's personality has in the world with other men. We owe much to our bodies and senses. It is very doubtful if man has any innate knowledge at all. All that he learns is gained through the medium of the senses and the body. Habits, education, the training in science and crafts, even religion itself, are all learned through the physical senses. When we pick up a book it is with the consciousness that some man has written it through the medium of his physical senses, and we are reading it with our physical eyes. All that we hear is through the medium of our physical ears. Certainly the great men who wrote the Sastras would never have written had they believed that knowledge could not be communicated through physical means. Again, we have the obligation to give and help, and that can only be rendered

through the medium of the organs of our bodies. Whether we teach or make shoes, whether we preach or till fields, no matter what we do, it is through our physical bodies and organs that we render service. Truly, our bodies are gifts of God, and as such we must dedicate them in stewardship to Him.

2. The Stewardship of the Heart, the Mind, and the Will (Rom. vii. 2).

In the second verse of this chapter Paul speaks of the transforming and renewing of our minds so that we may be able to know and to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Certainly the mind or heart is the most powerful faculty in the personality of man. It is the directing power. All is subservient to it. The writer of Proverbs was right when he said 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' Jesus summed up the first Table of the Decalogue as follows:— 'You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole mind.' Here we enter into the very powerhouse of personality. We consider the directing force, together with the motives which lie behind all actions and words, and the will which puts thoughts into execution.

The duty which Paul urges in this verse is that of self-development. Man is beset by a peculiar danger in this regard. This danger is that his motives and ways of thinking may be moulded according to the popular opinions of a selfish society. In order to be a steward of personality a man must necessarily mingle with men. The danger is that as he tries to help them and influence them for good he is apt to fall into their ways of thinking. He, instead of conditioning society, finds that society is conditioning him. Jesus dwells on this danger continually. He says that men seek

to lay up treasures on earth, to become rich in lands and property, to wear fine raiment and occupy prominent positions, to lord it over men through authority and force, to make everyone subservient to their customs. He warns his disciples repeatedly against such motives. He says, 'Be ye not like unto them.' He says 'Seek ye first God's kingdom and his righteousness.' So strong is this temptation that it came even to Jesus Himself, and runs throughout the wilderness experience. It is exceedingly difficult to be 'salt' in society, purifying and cleansing it; to be lights in a world that resents light and prefers evil because its works are evil and evil loves darkness and obscurity. The spirit of the world is subtle and clever, but hard and unyielding. Its first effort is to compromise and transform the steward into its own ways of thinking. If it fails it then becomes antagonistic, and even kills. Paul devotes whole chapters to this grave danger, urging stewards that they do not walk as the people of the world walk, in the vanity of their minds, being darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts, who being past feeling give themselves up to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Cf. Eph. Chaps. iv, v.) The insidiousness of the popular thought of men is seen when we observe how it clothes itself in the garments of religion itself. In his book, *With and Without Christ*, Sadhu Sundar Singh tells of meeting a Sadhu with self-withered hand. When asked how his arm had become dried and fixed he with great pride answered: 'Sir, with this hand I have stolen much, and have beaten many, but there came a day when I had such a great shock that the foundations of my whole life were shaken. I left my old life altogether, and decided that I would either cut off this hand, or, by making it useless, give it the punishment it deserved. I consulted my guru and, on his advice, I held it up continuously above my head

till it had completely dried up, and become fixed in this position. Now I am very proud of it.' But when Sundar Singh chided him and told him it would have been better to have used his hand in doing good to others, the Sadhu became so angry that he wanted to strike him. Thus we see how, under the very cloak of religion, the spirit of self-glory and pride became dominant in the heart of this man. He had become conformed to the spirit of the world. In the New Testament we see that Jesus found the pressure of the self-seeking spirit upon His disciples so great that their religious devotion also became one of self-seeking. They said we have left all, therefore we ought to receive the greatest rewards. They quarrelled among themselves as to who was the greatest. They desired the more important places in the Kingdom of God.

So great is the self-seeking spirit of the world that it conditions even children through heredity. The Church has always called it original sin, and has contended that it could only be broken by a Saviour. Man cannot break it of his own power. That is the New Testament teaching. Only through the redeeming blood of God's only Son can it be broken. When we realize that God Himself has redeemed us, and put ourselves completely under His guru-ship, then only is there hope. Then our minds and hearts and wills are transformed and we are able to know and understand and do God's will. Then we become imitators of God, as His beloved children, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us to be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Cf. Eph. v. 1, 2). The stewardship of our personalities to God can be rendered only through His help, through prayer and communion with Him, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and through walking and loving as Jesus walked and loved. We need to be reborn,—born again out of the spirit of popular opinion into one of stewardship into the Kingdom of God.

3. The Stewardship of Vocation and Special Talents. Rom. xii. 3-9.

Paul now turns, in the third verse of the 12th Chapter of Romans, to the stewardship of personality in society. From the point of view of stewardship the aim of self-development is the service of our fellowmen. Indeed, self-development is inseparably bound up with the development of our neighbours, for without service to our fellowmen there can be no self-development. This is roughly illustrated by the river Jordan, in Palestine, which flows into two great lakes. The one is the Sea of Galilee. The other is the Dead Sea. The clear, fresh mountain water flows into the Sea of Galilee from one side and is given out on the other. The same water flows into the Dead Sea and there remains, for there is no outlet. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by luxuriant vegetation, thriving towns of people, and this sea is full of fish and living creatures. The Dead Sea is stagnant and so salty that no life can exist in it. It is surrounded by barren plains and waste land. So is it with man in his stewardship. He who receives and also gives is like the Sea of Galilee,—a blessing and a life-giving power. He who would only receive becomes a curse and though living, still is dead. He himself becomes stagnant and is ruined.

The first duty of stewardship in society is that of faithfulness in the vocation which is ours in life. Every man must do something to earn a livelihood. He may do his work faithfully or he may do it grudgingly. He may do it as an eye-pleaser, or he may do it as unto the Lord, who looks upon the heart. He may be a humble cooly or servant but he can render his service in such a way as to bring greater blessings to men than many who are placed in high position. It was a humble maidservant that kept the mother of Augustine from becoming a drunkard. Augustine's mother became a good woman and it was she who was largely

responsible for influencing Augustine to become a changed man. Many a humble cooly has been the means of changing the lives of men about him. The goodness of his life, his righteousness and devotion, his faithfulness in his work, radiate a sweet fragrance that impresses all, even those of the meanest dispositions. A Francis of Assisi, who owns nothing and is dressed in rags, can change the life of selfish rich men. A Thomas à Kempis, a cook in a boarding hostel, becomes a great influence for good in his community. Our stewardship in society does not depend on high position, or on wealth but rather on faithfulness in the sight of God.

But every man, as he takes up his vocation in society, is faced with temptation. Paul picks out the greatest temptation which confronts man in this connection,—the temptation which is the root of all others. It is the temptation that man ‘thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think.’ It is quite natural that man, having the power to objectify himself, should think about himself more than he thinks about others. He becomes, to himself, the most important person in the world. He is the centre of his own circle among men and the tendency is for him to think of himself as the most important. He draws himself in and becomes grudging in disposition because he thinks others do not appreciate him. Now the New Testament does not teach that a man should not think of himself at all. Certainly he must think of himself, criticize himself, evaluate himself. The teaching of the New Testament is that ‘he should love his neighbour *as himself*.’ That is, he should look at himself as God looks at him. God loves all his children. Jesus Christ died for all. He died for you, it is true, but He also died for your neighbour. This does not mean that all men are exactly the same in ability and that all should do the same work. Some have more, some have less. Various degrees of self-estimation are right and true. But when a man recalls that all that he is and has is a trust from God then he is humble. He does

even the humblest service, leaving the matter of position in life to take care of itself. He neither grasps for high position, nor does he avoid it, for he is rendering stewardship to God and the position he has is not his own but a trust from God. This consciousness enables him to see things in their right perspective; it enables him to keep from pride, which is the beginning of insaneness and leads to wrath and the ruin of reason. This is the Christian view of a balanced mind.

Paul next calls attention to a fact that all thoughtful and sane men always keep in mind, namely, that man cannot think of himself as an individual alone but that he is bound up in society and society itself is an organism, a social organism. So impressive is this fact that various religions have come to the conclusion that society itself is God. This is the view of Pantheism. Individual man is merely a drop of water in the great stream of life and the individual counts for nothing. This view of life is as extreme and erroneous as materialism, which denies the right of fellowmen and makes a capital 'I' the supreme interest in life. Without the individual man there would be no society and without society there would be no individual. Nevertheless there is some truth in pantheism. Every man is dependent on society, as we have said. Every man is indebted to society. Christianity regards this debt as more than one due to society, but as one due to God, who is man's creator and redeemer. As man goes about rendering his stewardship to society he must keep in mind more than himself and his own salvation. He must realize his place in society as in a great social organism. He must work together with other men. Pride, jealousy, envy and selfishness cause disturbance and disruption in society. They are like infections that break out in boils on the body. Paul uses the figure of the human body to illustrate the relation of the individual to the church as a composite, social organism. John uses the figure of the vine and the branches. Both figures have their limitations.

The hand has no power of self-determination in itself as each individual man has. The branch has no freedom of will. There is no figure of speech which will convey the idea exactly. The figure which Paul uses is capable of gross misinterpretation for it may be conceived in such a way as to eliminate from individual man all power of freedom entirely. It may make him a mere cog in the Brahma-wheel of fate and make God responsible for evil as well as good. John's figure likewise may be misinterpreted. 'Man can do nothing', say such mistaken minds, 'he is exactly what God made him, and he only can do exactly what God makes him do.' Both of these figures must be interpreted in the sense in which the writers intended—and, from our point of view, that is in terms of stewardship. When man realizes that he is God's steward then he tries to do exactly what God wants him to do. He fulfils the vocation in which he finds himself in society as a stewardship of God. The figures apply only to those who accept their position in life in this fashion. Those who do not accept their position in life as a stewardship given by God work in antagonism to God, and do nothing of value. They even corrupt society. Stewards work as members of society, rendering their service in society. Individuals retain their value not as independent and self-centred beings but as members one of another. It is as a light and as salt in society, whatever their position, that they work out their stewardship. The position is not the essential thing. It is not the quantity but the quality of their ministry that counts. We do not see salt but we know it is there. Light is useful in proportion as it helps and does not blind men. Putting our light on a lampstand is not for the glory of the light but to give light to all within the house. Even a child can radiate goodness by doing his tasks cheerfully with his whole heart. The person who always seeks to gain credit for himself is a poor steward. The whole point of Paul's teaching about the stewardship of man in his vocation in society falls on the

phrase 'in Christ'. In Him we are redeemed. In Him we see the whole of God's purpose in the world. Christ is the key of life. Christ has ultimate value for the individual as an individual, and for the individual as a member of society. In Christ all are members one of another. The redemption that restores us to our Father restores us also to our fellow-men. We serve God through serving our fellows. The stewardship passes the selfish motive of 'I' and 'mine' and becomes one of benefiting the whole family and it is this blessing that is a ministry to God. 'In Christ' I see my vocation in life as a stewardship entrusted to me by God.

Paul now turns to special talents (v. 6). That there are individuals who have special talents is a fact that all recognize. Some men are specially gifted as speakers or preachers. Some are gifted as writers. Others are gifted in music, or in art, or in some other way. A special gift tends to make the individual feel exalted above his fellows. Some of the most gifted artists and even preachers have been most proud and haughty. Others have been men whose aim in life was like that of Simon the Sorcerer,—the acquisition of wealth, position and power. There is special danger along this line to the one who works in the field of religion. The preacher can use his position to speak his own opinions instead of God's word. He needs constantly to remind himself that his special gift is a stewardship of God. The pastor can easily become selfish, using his position for his own selfish ends and not according to the purpose of God. False and hireling shepherds have always been numerous and this is ample testimony to the danger. The teacher likewise has a position of peculiar advantage and temptation. It is easy to neglect preparing a lesson and waste time in the class room; to use the class time for talking about irrelevant subjects; to pamper students into easy ways and failure rather than walking the hard way of plodding. It is easy for him to feel self-important in virtue of his position. The evangelist

is another who is in danger of drawing attention to himself rather than to Christ. Men with the gift of exhortation can play on men's emotions and excite them. They can easily slip from the stewardship of evangelism into becoming actors whose purpose is to make men laugh and to entertain them. To be an evangelist with the sole purpose of leading men into communion with God is not easy. How often in the Old Testament did exhorters and prophets preach to please men, forgetting God! They became the tails instead of the heads of society, following the whims of men instead of telling them the will of God. (Cf. Isa. ix. 15; xxx. 10). Another position filled with grave danger is that of the giver. He is constantly faced with the temptation of giving in a patronizing manner, regarding that which is being given as entirely his own and not as a trust from God. He makes his aim the exaltation of himself and holds in mind his own superiority instead of putting himself in the position of the unfortunate brother and facing his difficulties from his point of view. The man who thinks of himself and his own honour in his giving, always sees his gift as large. His giving is bound to be done sparingly and grudgingly. Paul also mentions the ruler. The man in this position tends to become arrogant, relying on the prestige of his position rather than on the diligent administration of his stewardship. Finally Paul refers to those who engage in merciful work, whether it be the doctor or nurse or any of us who visit the sick and the unfortunate. There is the danger that this will be done in a formal and businesslike way and that the personal touch and cheerfulness and sympathy may be absent. All these, and many more, are special talents and opportunities for special service. Those to whom such special responsibilities are entrusted, have a special stewardship to render. Whether he preaches or teaches or rules it is in the name of the Lord. If he gives or goes upon an errand of

mercy it must be in the consciousness that his abundance and his good health are gifts of God and must be ministered as such.

4. The Stewardship of Love. Read Romans xii. 9-21.

This is a trust given to everyone who acknowledges that he is a steward of God. No matter whether it be the Christian in the lowest position in life, or he who has a task of great responsibility; no matter whether it be in vocation or in every day living or in the administration of special gifts and callings, the stewardship of love is one that all are called upon to render. There are none exempted. It is possible to all. The humblest act, when done in love, glows with the radiance of the dewdrops on the lotus flower under the rays of the morning sun. Jesus says :—

‘ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. And then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee ? or athirst, and gave thee drink ? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these least, ye did it unto me.’ (Matt. xxv. 34-40).

Great talents and high positions of responsibility and leadership can be viewed in their proper perspective only in the light of the stewardship of love. In this stewardship the thoughts of ‘ high ’ and ‘ low ’ disappear. In the light of love there is no word or act which can be called unimportant. Governing positions, the power of oratory and preaching, the ability to prophesy, the ability to work miracles, and all such things have always loomed great in the

sight of men. Paul deals with them in the 12th Chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. But in the 13th Chapter he says :—

‘ If I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge ; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind ; love envieth not ; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil ; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.’

Love is the only way in which to overcome evil effectually. Love is the only means by which the ministry of stewardship can root the seed of Christian life in the good ground of men’s hearts.

Love can only be known in its fullness when man realizes, in the Cross, that God is love. The almightiness of God is His love. In the perspective of God’s love man gains that sense of humanity and lowliness of mind which make his every work and deed one of love.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Read Psalm xxxii.
 - (a) What is pressing upon David’s heart and why ?
 - (b) Why does he not get relief ?
 - (c) When did he get the consciousness of relief ?
 - (d) Read Rom. Chaps. i and ii. Have all men a conscience ? Can conscience and the sense of pity be killed ? If so what is the resultant state of man ?
2. Explain the meaning of the metaphor which Peter has in mind in 1 Peter i. 13.
3. Read 1 Sam. Chaps. ix-xxi. What would you say was the root of King Saul’s failure ?
Would you deem Jonathan a great man in the sight of God ?
If so why ?

4. Make a study of Peter from the point of view of stewardship of personality.
5. Mention three one-talent men in the Bible who could be accounted as good stewards.
6. What is your vocation? What would the ideal of Christian life in that vocation be?

ADVANCED STUDY

7. In the second chapter of the Gita we see Arjuna refusing to kill his enemies. He is rebelling against his caste duty as a Kshatriya.
 - (a) Why does he rebel?
 - (b) Is he right or wrong?
 - (c) What does Krishna persuade him to do?
 - (d) What would Jesus say?
8. What is the danger of asceticism? For whom does the ascetic suffer? Describe asceticism from the point of view of stewardship.
9. When may a martyr really be a hypocrite?
10. What is the Hindu view of the body of man?
11. What is the difference between the Hindu and Christian views of man as a personality?
12. What is the difference between the Hindu and Christian view of self-control?

CHAPTER IV.

The Scope of Man's Stewardship—*contd.*

2. Time.

TIME is one of the most mysterious things in the universe. When we look up the word in a dictionary we find a description of the measurement of time,—seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years—but we find no definition of what time really is. It is undefinable. Yet time is such a commonplace thing in the experience of man that all think they know what it is. Every man has an idea of what it is and yet no man knows. We are placed in time and we know that our lives in this world are governed by it.

No man can escape it. Without time there would be no development or progress. And yet many deny that there is any real development or progress. They say, 'Is not time along with development and progress a delusion (Maya)? The seed sprouts, grows into a great tree, but it grows old and dies. It may bring forth other seeds but these too follow the same course. What then does progress amount to? Is there any such thing as real progress? Is it not a delusion? Is not time merely a turning wheel of fate?' Such has been the thought of some of the most profound thinkers the world has known. It was the thought of the Stoics of Greece.

'The universe, at the end of every world-period—a recurring cycle of enormous length,—was reabsorbed into that Divine fire, and then started afresh to run an exact repetition of its course; ages hence another Socrates would teach in another Athens, and there was nothing new under the sun; all has happened before, and history merely repeated itself. . . Hence the power that ruled the universe was destiny; but it differs from the terrible Babylonian Fate, for it was all-wise and that which it decreed for men was best for them. Indeed it was God, for the universe was the product of design, and He has made the laws which ruled it, summed up in that Universal Law which was really Himself; He too obeyed the Law he had created. He was not a God devoid of moral qualities, for His design was all-wise and all-good; the stars did not turn blindly in their courses, but illustrated His providence for sailor and husband-man. In the hands of the religious Cleanthes He is even a merciful God; He makes all the odds even, and that which is dear to none other is dear to Him. Still every thing was determined and in this determinism the Stoics encountered the usual difficulty, for first and foremost their system was a moral one, and without free will there can be no morality; the logical outcome of determinism is antinomianism. I may do what evil I will, for that too is fated.'—W. W. TARN, *Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 272.

Somewhat along the same line has been the thought of the Hindu seers. In the Gita, Krishna says:—

'Those men who are knowers of Day and Night know that the Day of Brahma endures a thousand Mahayugas (one Mahayuga is

4,320,000 years), and know his Night a thousand Mahayugas long. From the Unmanifest spring forth all manifest existence at the coming of Day ; at the coming of Night they are all dissolved even in that whose name is the Unmanifest. This same company of beings comes to existence again and again, and without will of its own is dissolved at the coming of Night.' (*Gita*, viii. 17-19). -

The conclusion of writers of the *Gita* is that every man is just as fixed in his nature as plant and animal life. The mango seed can do nothing but become a mango tree. So it is with man. Krishna tells Arjuna, 'Bound by thine own duty, born of thine own nature, that thing which thou desirest not to do by reason of delusion thou shalt do, even against thy will. (xviii. 60). Time, therefore, is a Brahma wheel of fate, and man turns automatically with the wheel. Progress is delusion.

Now this view of time has a most depressing effect on man. Man says, 'What is the use of doing anything? All is what it is and no effort of mine will change it.' So the ideal of India is the Yogi and the Ascetic, who escape from time as far as possible and attempt to live entirely apart from the world of the changing. The Ascetic sits on the banks of the Jumna and sings:—

‘Is it a god or a king that comes?

Both are evil and both are strong.

With women and wantoning, trumpets and drums,
Carry your gods and your kings along.’

But this view of time suits not only the ascetic but also the materialist. For if the world of change and time is nothing but delusion why not eat, drink and be merry? If all is but a delusion and meaningless why not enjoy it? Pantheism leads directly to polytheism, which is the worship of things as they are. Men with such a view of time can readily bow before the goddess of wealth, or the goddess of pleasure, or the goddess of a full stomach, or any other goddess.

That there are wide areas of nature in which man has no control, cannot be denied. The revolutions of the stars and heavenly bodies, the turning of the earth on its axis, the rising and falling of the tide, the coming of day and night and the regular rotation of the seasons, all go on without any effort of man. In the fields we see the seed growing, the flower blooming, the grain ripening automatically without any help on the part of man. Indeed in man himself there is much that goes on without any will or conscious effort. He breathes, digests food, his blood circulates, even when he is asleep. But then man does make a difference. Nature, without the husbandry of man, is a wild and almost useless thing. Who does not know the difference between a wild and a cultivated mango, or between wild and cultivated rice? The cocoanut tree thrives only in company with man. And as to man himself—what a difference there is between the wild and the cultivated man! It is the difference between the crude, untamed barbarian who is but little different from the brute and the righteous and holy saint. It is true that education may increase the power of evil as well as the power of good. It is true that a bad cultivator may turn fertile land into a germ breeding swamp. Man may misuse his stewardship but that does not deny the fact that man is a steward both of nature and himself. And in this stewardship time is a factor—an important factor. The Christian view of time is, first, that time is opportunity.

1. Time is Opportunity. (Ps. xc. 12 ; John ix. 4 ; Eph. v. 15, 16).

The first thing that Christianity says about time is that time is not eternal. It has a beginning and it has an end. The man that thinks and acts as if time were eternal, that holds the opinion that no matter what he may do or say, it really makes no difference for sooner or later he will reach the same place or state that all the rest reach, is, according

to Christianity, a foolish man. Time is not eternal. It is a period of opportunity and if those opportunities are not grasped they are gone 'forever. The hour that has just past is gone forever. It will never return. In the Parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi) when the rich man had passed beyond death and his account had been taken and he had been found wanting he prayed for comfort. He was told 'Son, remember that in your span of life on earth you had your chance and did not take it. Your opportunity is gone both for service and comfort.' The New Testament is full of warnings regarding the preciousness of the opportunities that time furnishes and regarding the pathetic state of those who have neglected their opportunities and, when called suddenly to account, are found wanting. The sharpest arrows that can pierce a man's heart are those words which stab the heart of the man who has been negligent in the stewardship of time. Suddenly he is called 'This night thy soul is required of thee.' The opportunities of time are at an end. He hears the judge's sentence and finds that his time of opportunity is gone,—'Son, remember.' Truly the poet is right who said that the saddest thing of tongue or pen is 'it might have been'. We know not the day nor the hour. There are no warnings and periods of preparation granted for the great and final examination. It comes like a thief in the night. The man who delays and trifles with time is gambling with eternity. So important is time to man that one poet, Longfellow, has said: 'Time is the life of the soul.'

For the Christian, the steward of time, the period of opportunity is '*now*'. The acceptable time is the present. We must live every day as if it were the last day, for the night cometh when no man can work. One is greatly impressed by the activity of Jesus. The most frequently occurring word in Mark's Gospel is 'straightway'. It denotes the business of seizing every opportunity to do good and to teach. The most important issues of life often

hinge on the small, trivial incidents of every day. The turning points in our lives have often nothing to show that they are turning points and opportunity in human life is as often that of judgment as it is of salvation. We do not know the forces that lie hidden in life all around us. We unconsciously determine our future because our eyes are or are not open to opportunity. If we knew the gift of God and who it is that says to us, 'Give me to drink ; we would have asked of Him and He would have given us living water.' 'If we only knew'—so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. But even a Simon Peter is blind. The Master warns him, saying 'Simon, Simon, Satan is planning to tempt you' but even then Simon cannot understand. The opportunity passes and Simon denies his Master. Every day and every moment is one of opportunity. Too often we are like the crew of the ship who were perishing of thirst on the great salty ocean. Their boat floated into the wide mouth of the Amazon River and they were surrounded by fresh water. They didn't know it and perished of thirst. We live and move in an ocean of opportunities. We are the stewards. Paul tells us that we are to buy up every opportunity. We are stewards of opportunity. The word he uses is that which applies to bargaining in the bazaar—we are to drive a hard bargain in using every moment. That is the Christian view of time. Time is opportunity—to be redeemed.

2. Time has ultimate meaning and value

It is true that time is a negative quantity. The clock strikes off the minutes and the hours—time itself is silent and seemingly dead. The strikings of the clock are only breaks in what is silent and empty space. But time cannot be left empty. It is not like a pot which may or may not be filled. When we contemplate the matter there is no such thing as empty time. It is either used or misused. There is

no middle ground. He who does not use time does worse than wrap his talent in a napkin. Time is not like money, which can be saved. Time can only be spent and if not spent wisely, it is wasted. Time cannot be stored. When it is past it is gone. Time is like a garden, in which we may plant either good or evil seed. Idleness and neglect breed evil, or, according to the Spanish proverb, 'Men are usually tempted by the devil, but the idle man positively tempts the devil.' Both good and evil grow, or, to change the figure, spread like the leaven spreads through the lump. Both are infectious, the one to corruption; the other to purification and healthiness.

The New Testament is quite clear that the stewardship of time has meaning in eternity. Life in this world is a season of opportunity and preparation. Used rightly it brings joy and happiness after death. Used wrongly it brings death in a far more serious way than merely the dissolution of the body. Little in the New Testament is said about the next life, and that little is figurative. Perhaps it is best so, for the human mind cannot comprehend any state which is not conditioned by time. Paul speaks of our becoming joint heirs with Christ Jesus. John says we will become like Him—sons of God. That likeness does not wait until the dissolution of our earthly bodies. It begins now, and we fill time with deeds of good, with prayer, praise and songs of devotion,—and we bring forth the fruits of the spirit,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control. Time filled in this way is like a river of living water on whose banks flourish all the blessings and beauties of God.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Draw up a schedule for your full day.
 - (a) How much time should you sleep?
 - (b) How much time should be used for eating and recreation?

(c) How many hours should a healthy person work in your vocation ?

Do you work this full number of minutes ?

If not, why ?

2. What are the advantages and dangers in budgeting time in this manner ?

CHAPTER V.

The Scope of Man's Stewardship—*concl'd.*

3. *Money.*

IN many respects 'money' is the most important aspect of man's stewardship to God. Not that it is more important than the stewardship of personality or of time but because money plays such an important part in the use of time and the moulding of character. It is this aspect of 'money' that lies behind the thought of Paul when he says 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.' Luther said that we can discover the quality of a man by touching his purse; no man is converted fully until the conversion includes his purse. One of the many books which have been written about money, the book from which most of the material of this lecture is drawn, speaks of money as 'The Acid Test' of character. The author of this book, David McConaughy has not over-emphasized the subject. Perhaps this is the reason that our master put so many of his parables in terms of money.

When we examine 'what money is' we gain two answers.

(1) Money is man's most common measure in estimating value and the most frequently used medium of exchange. Not infrequently we even measure personality in terms of money. We say that such a man is a fifteen rupee man, and that another is a hundred rupee man. We even hear men speak occasionally of buying a girl. So also is the evaluation of time in terms of money. We serve so much time for a certain sum of money. The frequently quoted proverb 'Time is money' is not without some measure

of truth. Money serves as a measure of value and a medium of exchange all along the line. We buy lands, houses, cows and goods exchanging money for them. In industry we place a money value on the raw material, on the life expended in physical energy, thought and judgment, on the skill required to fashion the material into shape for use, on the time it takes to make and put the thing where it can be used, and on the quantity and quality and the resultant demand.

(2) Money is power. The man with money can buy, enjoy, use and command. 'Money is like electricity; it is stored power.' The rupees I get at the end of a month represent my labours for the month. The money which I get for the pot which I make and sell represents all the mental power, time and effort which I put into the work. The money which we get gives us a kind of power. I may exchange it for the necessities of life, or for luxuries, or I may help my neighbour, or I may hoard it or use it to dominate and enslave others.

Few are the people who do not come into contact with money in one form or another. It touches the beggar and the rich man, the citizen and the king, the worshipper and the priest. The strange thing about it all is that in every case men's characters are moulded by the manner in which they regard and handle money. It has been said that money makes men and in one sense this is true. The love of money leads to deception and stealing, to quarrels and murder, to the oppression of the employee by the employer and to the complete obscuring of all good. Even the Father's house may become a den of thieves instead of a place of prayer. Leaders of the Christian Church are rendered not only useless but positively harmful through being lovers of money and greedy of filthy lucre. (1 Tim. iii. 1-13). Yet money, rightly acquired and rightly used, is a power of great good. The final touch in the Parable of the

good Samaritan is when the good man gave two rupees to the keeper of the *satram* and asked that the wounded man be cared for. The good that has been done in the world through the generous giving of money is inestimable. Behind most of the great hospitals, educational institutions and the many instrumentalities for the uplift and helping of man lies the heart that has given of its money and love.

Money moulds and tests our characters in every way in which it touches us. As McConaughy points out:—(1) In our *acquiring* it we may either be made deceivers, thieves or exactors, or we may render service to God and man lovingly and whole-heartedly, getting money without ever thinking about it, and being made benefactors ourselves. (2) In our *spending* we may be either prodigals or providers. (3) In our *saving* we may be either conservers or misers. (4) In our *giving* we may be either philanthropists or patronisers. (5) In our *proportioning* we may be either partners or legalists. (6) In our *accounting* we may be either creditors or debtors. (7) In *influencing others* we may either be stepping-stones or stumbling blocks.

1. **Acquiring.**

(Deut. viii. 17, 18) 'Beware of saying to yourselves my own power and the strength of my own hand have won me all this wealth.' 'You must remember the Eternal your God, for it is he who gives you the power of gaining wealth. . . . ' (Moffatt).

In studying our first relationship to money we need to place the part that we play in acquisition in its proper perspective. Three partners have a share in all acquisition, viz., God, the individual and society. Each has his own distinctive work in producing value and without all three there would be no value. In McConaughy's words, 'God supplies life and raw material. The individual in whose possession it is, contributes his time, talent, and energy or their equivalent in money. Society supplies the market the demand which is the final factor in determining the

value.' In order to place the parts that each of these three play in acquisition in the proper perspective it is necessary that we try, each in his own case, to estimate at least to some degree, the proportionate amount that each of the three is responsible for. First let us think of God's part. In order to show the part that God contributes to our acquiring the above author gives an illustration from the field of industry. 'In an ordinary blast-furnace which requires 40,000 cubic feet of air a minute, each cubic foot weighing .076 pounds, a ton and a half of air is used each minute, 90 tons an hour, 2,160 tons a day. The human proprietor is utterly powerless to furnish this essential element. Since no amount of man-power could possibly supply it, God must come into the partnership or the business cannot continue for a single hour. Then, too, there is the raw material which God had stored away in the mountains and now puts in to produce the pig iron and, besides all this, the life of all the workers is included in his investment.' Certainly God's part in acquisition is by far the largest part. A little contemplation will show that this is true no matter what work we pursue. It is not so easy to show the part that society plays as a partner. Unless society bought and used the steel there would be no production. It is society that places the value on the produced article and pays for it. Even the farmer is dependent on society for the tools which he uses and the purchase of the crops he produces. The school teacher gets almost all the knowledge that he passes along from society and he passes it along to society. When we consider the parts that God and society play in our acquisition, our contribution is very small. One great manufacturer estimates his own personal part in acquiring as five per cent. Certainly in the case of most of us it is not more.

Then we need to examine the matter of how we acquire. The man who comes into possession of money or property

through inheritance has not acquired this through his own efforts. The very fact of earning possessions ourselves has character value, for it demands effort, thought of conservation, and carefulness. It gives us an appreciation of its value. He who inherits property gets little or none of this. In other words he has more power in his hands than he has been trained to use, consequently those who come into possessions through inheritance are often prodigal and wasteful. The beggar also renders no service for what he gets. Consequently begging is demoralizing. He has no real right to what he gets. The Christian is commanded to 'Study to . . . work with your hands . . . that ye have need of nothing.' (1 Thes. iv. 11, 12.) 'If any will not work neither let him eat.' (2 Thes. iii. 10) 'Let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.' (Eph. iv. 28). (Cf. Prov. xii. 11; xiii. 11; xv. 6). Our Master himself worked with his own hands, earning his food and handling money during the time He was a carpenter. The disciples had their various occupations. When they laid down their tools and engaged in public ministry they became labourers of another sort and were worthy of their food. The Christian, no matter what he does, acquires through service. He lays the emphasis not on acquiring, but on serving. He who lays the emphasis on acquiring becomes an exactor and a bargainer.

2. Stewardship of Money.

Matt. vi. 33. Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Matt. x. 8. Freely you have received, freely give.

1 Tim. v. 8. Whoever does not provide for his own relatives and particularly for his own family, has repudiated the faith; he is worse than an infidel.

Spending is closely related to acquiring. While we are acquiring we need to spend in order to maintain our strength

and efficiency in order to acquire. But there is a lure about spending that is the ruin of many. We are tempted to spend far beyond the requirements of maintenance. Through spending we experience the magical power of money. We rub this Aladdin's lamp and our wishes and whims are fulfilled. Our wishes become larger and money is the magical power which will fulfil them. We dream of what we could do if we had sufficient money. We covet the power money gives. The greatest incentive in acquiring is often that of spending. The passion to spend often becomes so great that men will borrow, running into debt, spending money which they have not yet earned. It is but a step further to getting money through stealing. But behind it all is the lure of spending, of having and using the magical power of money. It is in the manner in which a man spends his money that we know the man. It is in the realm of the use of money that we have what is called the acid test of character. Man's ideals, the objects for which he strives either become narrower and narrower and more selfish, or become wider and wider and more benevolent. Here we see money's magic power to mould men. No test is harder to withstand than that of the proper use of money. The prodigal will waste it,—pampering his every whim and fancy, destroying both himself and his money. The miser will hoard it and make it his god and for one who thus idolizes money Jesus is right when he says that it is 'Harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through a needle's eye.' In either case the process does not start after much riches have accrued. It starts in the very beginning, as soon as man has acquired his first wage.

Two men each get a salary of thirty rupees a month. Each has a family with two children. Each live in the same circumstances. For the one the thirty rupees are sufficient and he is able to save a little each month and also to set aside something for benevolence and the church. The other man

has a great difficulty in getting along on thirty rupees a month. At times he even incurs debts. His Vanity Fund, Hobby Fund and Folly Fund eat up all the surplus and often he is in want for real necessities. During the course of several years the salary of each man is gradually increased to sixty rupees a month. Is the second man now able to save a part of his salary and put aside something each month regularly for church and benevolent work? No, not by any means. His extravagances increase and will continue to do so no matter how much he gets. He exercises no real thought and careful planning in the stewardship of his money. As the prophet Haggai says 'he earneth wages to put it into a bag full of holes.' (i. 6).

The first requirement, therefore, of a good steward of money is the careful consideration of the relative value of various needs and the apportioning of certain proportions of what is being acquired to these needs. It is in the very act of the consideration of needs that the most frequent error with regard to the stewardship of spending usually occurs, viz., what is the first and primary need? Most stewards are inclined to put one of two things first:—either the development of greater powers of acquisition or the essential and comfortable maintenance of himself and his immediate family. Both of these needs are no doubt essential and weighty. The trouble with either of them is that they have 'self' and 'my own' at the centre, and the circle around this centre is such that everything is excluded except myself and mine. It is to avoid this first false step that the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament, sets forth the first great principle of the steward in spending. As the writer Arthur puts it, 'The first expenditure of all should be that which sanctifies the rest—that which is not for self or flesh or earth or time, but for the Lord, for gratitude, for the training of the soul, for store in heaven. Our own morsel will be sweeter and more wholesome, too, when the due acknowledgment has

been first laid with a bountiful hand and a thankful heart on the altar of the Saviour.' In the Old Testament we find the principle, 'ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God.' (Lev. xxiii. 14). This principle of stewardship runs through the New Testament—'the spirit of the firstfruits—a spirit of noble preference for the honour of God over selfish care.' We are to think first of God's part and 'all these things will be added.'

Starting with the principle of first setting aside a portion for the service of God, the next problem is that of proportioning,—how much shall I set aside as God's share? Here again there is danger. The vermin of selfishness slips in where there is the slightest bit of negligence or lack of alertness. It lays its eggs and these breed with startling rapidity, pervading the whole of life. In proportioning there are some who follow the Old Testament rule of setting aside one-tenth as God's share. This has the advantage of giving us something definite. But such a rule is beset by many subtle dangers. It almost invariably fosters the spirit of driving a bargain with God and of limiting and suppressing the spirit of gratitude without which any giving is hypocrisy. Men fall into the habit of thinking they have done their full duty when they have given their tithe. It destroys the spirit of true worship. The Pharisees tithed even to the minutest portions and forgot justice and mercy. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican the former was so proud and self-satisfied because he had fulfilled the rule that he set himself up as a god and even attempted to dictate to God himself. The New Testament adopts no rule but sets up a principle. We are to give as God has prospered us and we are to give whole-heartedly and cheerfully. This, of course, implies proportioning but lays down no fixed rule. This principle is not without dangers. The danger of seeing one's needs as very large and cutting down God's portion is great. Then,

too, there is the danger of postponing the setting aside of a portion for God and such procrastination almost inevitably results in giving little or nothing. So we are beset with dangers on both sides. Tithing breeds self-righteousness, pride and the spirit of bargaining, and spontaneous giving is beset by the danger of laxity and negligence. The steward must guard against both. He must maintain the spirit of spontaneity and cheerful gratitude and yet he must proportion and divide. Moreover his dividing must be honest. One of the first sins related in the Bible is that of Cain. Cain offered a portion to God but God did not accept it. God said to Cain, 'Why are you downcast? If your heart is honest, you would surely look bright. If you are sullen, sin is lying in wait for you, eager to be at you—but you ought to master it.' (Gen. iv. 6, 7 Moffatt.) The Church Father Tertullian translates this passage as follows: 'Why is thy countenance fallen? Hast thou not sinned if thou offerest aright *but does not divide aright?*' Cain's sin lay in not dividing aright. He tried to cheat God. Whether we set aside as God's portion one-tenth, or more, or less, our proportioning must be honest, and that not in our own view of the matter but in God's sight.

Rightly proportioning or dividing the expenditure of our money is not, therefore, a mere matter of mechanical fractions. We cannot bluntly put a certain fraction aside for God and regard the rest as our own. The matter of rightly dividing is one that concerns all that we have. Ultimately the whole matter roots back in myself,—my needs and the needs of my family and relatives. Here is the crux of the whole problem. Our Lord knows that we have certain needs nevertheless the principle of His Kingdom first holds. (Cf. Luke. xii. 30 and Matt. vi. 33). The difficulty with man is that his own needs loom large and his money never suffices for these. He looks not so much to the way in which things appear in God's sight but rather to how much his neighbour has. Jealousy

and envy lead him to think that he must have all the things that his neighbour has. This governs his dividing. His own needs therefore loom so large that he is inclined to set aside very little for God and even this little he gives grudgingly. Not only the portion set aside for God becomes contaminated by evil but the personality of the steward himself is ruined.

The matter of determining just what the steward needs for himself and his own immediate family circle is left in the steward's own hands. This can be seen clearly from an examination of the parables which we discussed in chapter two. Each steward is left free to use his own judgment but, and this must be noted, each is responsible in this as well as everything else to his master. The master has no place in his estimate of a man's needs for such things as love of pleasure, selfishness, pride, the wasting of time, foolish customs, or any of the things which men of the world seek. A careful re-study of these parables will lead to the great principle which determines the steward's needs. This principle is that the steward should spend that portion of his income on himself that will give him the highest efficiency as a steward. He needs living necessities for himself and his family, such as substantial and nutritious food, decent but not gaudy raiment, shelter ; he has need for higher development, such as education and some books ; he needs to care for the body in attending to it when he is sick ; he needs to maintain himself in his business or his profession and he needs to take an interest in his citizenship in the community and the nation. Necessities are those things which are indispensable to the welfare of himself and those about him. Luxuries are those things which afford self-gratification along the lines of ease, of pride or of self-indulgence.

Another need of the steward is that of saving. An important factor in saving is that of avoiding waste. He who would conserve must learn to avoid waste. We see Jesus' care in this respect in his command to the disciples after the

feeding of the five thousand. He said, 'Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.' (John. vi. 12). It is here that careless people often err most. Modern education and science has shown us that almost everything has a use. Many of the things which we value very highly are made of things which were once thrown out as useless. Even the ashes of wood are now used in the making of soap. While most of us lack the equipment to use such things nevertheless there is much we can do to eliminate waste. In spite of the fact that the number of poor people in India and their abject poverty is so great the waste in India is appalling. The quantities of food wasted in feasts, the superstitions regarding the cruel keeping of useless animals, the amounts of money spent on trifling and useless things—are such a waste that some experts declare that the elimination of such waste would provide everyone in India with sufficient for all the essential needs of bodily care.

Many sincere people are troubled about the problem of saving and providing for the future. They say, 'Did not Jesus tell us that we are not to be anxious about the morrow? Is not providing for the future a doubting of God's providence?' There is a sense in which providing for the future is wrong. But we need to draw a careful distinction between 'conserving' and 'miserliness'. It is true that Jesus did tell us not to be anxious about the morrow but it is also true that Jesus condemns as foolish those who do not think about the future and who neglect to prepare for emergencies. The five foolish virgins neglected to provide, and the five wise virgins did provide. (Matt. xxv. 8). The man who joins a provident fund is not doubting God's providence. He is simply doing what is sensible. The farmer who uses all his grain and does not keep seed for the next season is foolish. The wise man always saves something for educating his child, for repairing his house, for sickness or emergency,

for old age,—but he does not save simply for himself and for greed's sake. Jesus told us that we are not to lay up treasures upon earth where moth and rust consume. (Matt. vi. 19). To understand this passage we need to remember that moth and rust consume only such things as are not used. The knife that is constantly used does not rust; clothes that are frequently worn are not spoiled by moths. Money and things are meant for use. Unused they become a source of anxiety and danger. The birds to which Jesus refers are not entirely without providing for the future. They build their nests in advance and many even lay aside small stores of food in certain seasons. But they do not amass huge stocks and hoard as men are tempted to do. All hoarding is waste,—it is keeping out of use what should be in use. Careful conserving is the mark of a wise man. Such men are prepared for the emergencies of life and such wisdom usually does not fail to prepare for life after death—treasures in heaven. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth but rather in using wisely every thing and every opportunity which he has. Trust in God's providence is not to be measured by jumping off a mountain cliff or by walking in front of an on coming railway train. God expects us to use wisdom and discretion in our use of money. But the moment we hoard wealth and depend on it rather than on God—that moment our rice turns sour. Those who trust in riches and set them up as an idol in the stead of God are fools.

The only course which a wise and good steward can pursue is carefully to plan all the various factors which enter into dividing and proportioning the use of money and income. This must be done in advance—before we spend. The wise man sits down and takes all facts and exigencies into consideration before he starts building a house, otherwise he might not be able to finish it. (Luke xiv. 25–30.) The proportioning of money and income in this way is called

budgeting. Rendering accounts of one's stewardship implies that we must keep an account. Now when we sit down and actually estimate and budget for our needs and for providing for emergencies and special expenses which we know are going to come or which may come most of us are usually surprised how small the amount is that we really need for the proper maintenance of our bodies and families. Money gets away from the man who does not keep accounts in many sorts of ways which he cannot afterward remember. It simply disappears like water from a leaky pot. It is when we definitely plan, and write down so much for food, so much for clothes, so much for rent or taxes, so much and no more for pleasure and recreation and when we stick to those plans and do not grow lax that we know it can be done. Such accounting is the secret of rightly dividing and good stewardship. The man and woman who plan their income in this way usually have sufficient and when the matter of setting aside God's portion comes they give and give cheerfully and with a good heart.

The greatest and most blessed part of the stewardship of money and of things is that of giving. Giving is not a duty—it should never be that. Giving is a privilege. The man who gives grudgingly always injures himself. There is much truth hidden in the story told by the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore. He tells of an Indian *sanyasi* standing by the road begging. He saw a king approaching and prepared to hold out his bowl for a gift. But he was surprised when the king held out his hand and asked for something. The *sanyasi* picked the very smallest grain of rice that he could find out of his bowl and gave it to the king. When he returned to the *satram* at night and poured the rice from his bowl he found a small piece of gold. It was exactly the size of the piece of the rice he had given the king. The beggar bitterly wept and wished he had given the king all his rice. 'Let each man do according as he hath

purposed in his heart ; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.' (2 Cor. ix. 7).

The only true motive by which giving can be done is that of love. Any gift given without love is useless and even harmful. The coin thrown to the beggar whose name and need we do not know not only fills the beggar with a hatred of our show of pride and superiority but also breeds a sense of pride and merit in the heart of him who gave. Love in giving is to be like that of God. God gave His Son, and Jesus Christ did not give as some wealthy zemindar casting out of his abundance and superiority. Jesus Christ came and lived among men, sharing their needs, suffering with them, and giving to the uttermost. We love because He first loved us. Love never gives ostentatiously—the left hand does not know what the right hand giveth. (Matt. vi. 3). Love always gives of itself,—it learns the real need, it considers what gift will do the sufferer the most permanent good, it considers how his gift can be given without injuring the self-respect of the receiver, it is not satisfied with one gift only but seeks to bring the unfortunate one into a position of brotherhood and stewardship again. Love seeks no merit, either on earth or in heaven ; love seeks no praise ; its gifts are not given in the expectation of receiving a like amount at some future date ; love does not give to advertise self. Love's one aim is helping the unfortunate back to a position of equality and brotherhood, and love does not think of self.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. One of the best books written about ' Food ' in India is that of Robert McCarrison, Director of Nutritional Research, Pasteur Institute, Coonoor. On page 41 of his book it is said :—' If we take paddy, fresh from the rice-fields, husk it and give it, with water, as food to pigeons they will remain well. But if the paddy be sent to a rice mill, where it is turned into white, polished rice, and then it be given

with water to the pigeons they will lose their appetite, become very thin, suffer from diarrhoea, get paralysed, and die. The milling and polishing has removed from the rice 'Something' which is necessary to the life and health of the birds. . . . If we give the rice polishings to the pigeons in addition to the white polished rice they will remain well, or if the white rice has made them ill the polishings will enable them to recover.'

- (a) In estimating the portion of income which should be set aside for maintaining the best health and highest efficiency in the steward and his family what should be our aim ?
 - (b) Are expensive foods always more nutritious than cheaper foods ?
 - (c) What are the most nutritious foods for the labourer ?
For the student, the clerk, the teacher ?
2. It takes far more food to keep a cow or an ox in useful condition than it does a man. The number of useless animals in India is estimated to be more than a crore.
- (a) What is the effect on the country of keeping animals which are of no use ?
 - (b) Is it kindness to avoid killing animals and yet to let them live in an undernourished or diseased state—either at a low power of usefulness or utterly useless ?
3. Make out a budget for yourself and those dependent on you taking into consideration all the aspects of stewardship.
4. Israel lived on manna in the wilderness for about forty years. Why did Jesus refuse to become a 'food' King ? Why do not missions call all the beggars who will come and feed them daily ? Would not this be meritorious ?

ADVANCED STUDY

5. A man sets about amassing a fortune. While he is doing this he plans that, when he has gained sufficient money, he will then do much good.
- (a) What are the dangers in such planning ? While he is amassing his money what is happening to his personality ?

- (b) Under what handicaps does the man with much money always work ?
6. Since money means power what are the dangers of the man who has money in acting as its steward ? Suppose you are the steward of other people's gifts, as is a missionary, or a pastor, or one who has charge of a school—is the power which money gives any less, and is there the same danger as there is in the case of a man who has money which he has earned ?
 7. The ownership of riches and the increase of material wealth is a great hindrance of true religion, piety and love. What is the cure ? Is it poverty ? Is it asceticism ? What is it ?
 8. Should we give to beggars, or not ?

CHAPTER VI

What is Stewardship ?

Acts iv, 32. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul : and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common.

THERE are many words for the term ' steward ' in the New Testament. Moreover although at times the same word is used there is obviously a difference in what it connotes. Sometimes the steward is a slave assigned to some kind of work but given only his livelihood and no wage. All his time is the master's. Sometimes he is a servant and given a wage. Sometimes he is in charge of a number of men and directing their work. Sometimes the word used denotes that the steward has charge of the master's children and is a kind of father-teacher. Sometimes different kinds of stewards are mentioned in the same parable, as for example, in the Parable of the Vineyard which we studied. (Matt. xx. 1-16). All this seems confusing. But when we contemplate the matter we see that it must necessarily be so, for if it were otherwise it would be untrue to conditions as we see them

in the world. The positions of stewards are different. We must deal with life as it is but aim to make it what it might become.

But when we examine what stewardship is we find that the general principle back of it all is the same in every case. The work assigned may be different and the amount placed in different hands may vary but the responsibility is the same in every case. Every steward is given some work to do. Again every steward has to work together with other stewards,—no matter whether he has charge of them or whether he has to work together with them as an equal, or whether he has to work under them,—whatever his relation the influence of his life affects other stewards and helps mould their characters. This applies in the steward's relationship outside his immediate family,—he who labours for a master whether the master be Hindu or Christian ;—he who is a master and employs either Christians or non-Christians ;—he who is a teacher or pastor ; whether we buy or sell in the bazaar, whether we teach or are taught, whether we give or are given to. It applies in the family,—husband or wife, children or parents, masters or house-servants. Again the real master to whom we must render our stewardship is not physically present. The general principle back of all stewardship is the same. We labour and use property to serve God in serving men. We aim to transform men into being transformed into the likeness of God, and in this task we ourselves are transformed.

Now the first answer as to what is stewardship is that it is a trust. God has entrusted much to our care. We must take care of it, watch it, and see that it is not damaged and lost. We may watch it as the soldiers watch the valuable crown jewels in the tower of London,—seeing that they are not stolen. We may take care of it as a grain merchant takes care of his bags of grain, pouring it out every two or three weeks, putting it in the sunlight to prevent vermin and

corruption from destroying it. We may watch it as a man watches a delicate instrument, keeping it under a glass case and preventing dampness from causing rust or dust from tarnishing it. But trust in this sense is a purely negative thing. Stewardship that does not go beyond this is worth little. Certainly the master was not pleased with the steward who wrapped his talent in a napkin and buried it. It is true that we need this negative aspect of stewardship. We need to protect and to watch. But we need to do more.

The second answer to what is stewardship is that it fosters increase and development. This is of positive and essential value. Keeping seed from spoiling is one thing ; making it increase is another. If the steward be a labourer in a farmer's field he does his work in such a fashion that the seed will produce the best possible increase. He will clear away the weeds, being careful to get out the roots ; he will dig the ground thoroughly so that the seed can take deep root and have the benefit of the moisture that is not dried away quickly by the heat of the sun. If the steward be a merchant he will buy and sell honestly, realizing that his business will increase in proportion as his customers are satisfied. If he be a teacher he will lay the foundations of true learning thoroughly in the student's mind, realizing that the success of the student in later school life as well as in the world depends on thorough foundations. He aims at growth, development and preparation for life in the student. If the steward be a father he will cultivate good habits in his children, realizing that the habits learned in youth mould the development of the characters of the future men and women. In all of his relations with men the good steward watches and does his work in such a way as to foster the increase of the good and the crowding out of the bad. It is in the fostering of increase that true stewardship makes itself manifest. Even a wall or an iron safe can guard treasure. But the steward is one who, working together with God, can bring

about development and increase,—in nature, in his family and his fellowmen, and in himself. We need to note the expression ‘working together with God’, for, after all, it is God who gives the increase. No man can make one measure of grain increase sixty fold. No man can transform another man into something better. God gives the increase. But, and again we need to note it, man has his stewardship. The divine economy of the world is so arranged that God is also dependent on man. He works together with man. To make seed increase sixty fold requires thorough work and fostering care; and to transform men into better beings requires even more thorough work, patience, tact, and care. Too much zeal may do more harm than good. Man takes upon himself a part of that which he should leave to God. Too little zeal and care will not produce the conditions wherein God can bring about the increase. In fostering development and increase the steward finds himself working together with God.

Working together with God has an influence on the steward himself, and leads to self-development. God is not a hard-hearted and greedy taskmaster who keeps his servant in the lowest possible position exacting from him all that He can of profit. There is promotion in stewardship; not the kind of promotion that we see in connection with educational qualifications and salary scales,—but a promotion that is far more intimate and loving. We call it promotion only because that is a word that everyone knows and human language knows no better word. This promotion has several gradations of advancement. (1) As the steward works faithfully, keeping in mind the purpose that God has in mind and performing this, doing his work in imitation of Christ obediently and with love, he realizes he is a *co-worker* with God. He does not remain a perfunctory, or professional, or impersonal agent of God, but becomes a fellow-worker together with God. (1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1, etc.). Strange

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as it may seem the steward comes to a realization that God is working alongside of him and engaged in the same task as he is engaged in. The fact that God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ and worked the works of man as they should be worked takes on new meaning. 'My father works and I work', says Jesus (John v. 17), and the disciples of the master work together with Him and the Father with the same oneness of purpose and will. In this joint endeavour there comes the realization in the steward also that God is working in him. He feels divine encouragement ; he receives a new strength which he cannot call his own. He finds that God is guiding him,—opening his eyes to opportunities ; warning him regarding temptations ; helping him in tasks which seem beyond his own strength. Prayer becomes a part of stewardship. The Holy Spirit takes on new meaning to him. He finds the Holy Spirit a comforter, a revealer of the meaning of what Jesus did and saw, a guide and ever present helper in time of trouble, a solver of doubts, and a strengthener. (2) The steward then comes into the consciousness that he is a *friend or partner* of God. God is taking him into His confidence. Commands and obedience are no longer those of master and servant but rather the quiet talks and planning together of partnership. (John xv. 15). The steward finds that he is not only working together with God but also *sharing responsibility* with Him. He is the ambassador of God. Whatever he says and does either helps or injures both God and himself ; either promotes God's and his own cause or does it harm. He realizes that men judge God by what they see him as a steward doing or hear him saying. As the steward realizes more and more the responsibility of partnership he strives to become a living epistle of Christ so that men, knowing and reading him, may be led to know Christ. Partnership with God is not easy to obtain. God does not give it to any and everyone who asks or seeks. It is obvious that God could not

entrust such responsibility and power to one who is merely a hireling. Partnership is something that God alone can give. He looks on the heart of man. Jesus knows men,—He knows whom He can trust and whom He cannot trust. Believing in Jesus and having Jesus believing and trusting us are two different things. ‘. . . many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself unto them. . . for he knew.’ (John ii. 23-25). In order to become a partner it is necessary to be a steward whom God can trust. The feeling of responsibility which partnership with God entails fills the steward with a sense of his own inadequacy and weakness. God is so great and we are so small that we wonder that God should make such an arrangement. We depend greatly and lean heavily on His wisdom and strength. Yet we become fully conscious of the new relationship and the power that comes with it. We enter into the experience of the disciples when they, sent out by Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom of God, return from their successful tour. We see the master rejoicing and hear His prayer, ‘I thank thee, O Father, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.’ (Luke x. 21-24.) Partnership means dependence on God and God’s dependence on us. But there is still something higher than partnership, and this something higher is the great aim and end to which God is ever looking and working. (3) The final stage in the development of stewardship is sonship of God. ‘Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.’ (Gal. iv. 7). All that we have is God’s and all that God has is ours. We are like Jesus and see Him as He is. In this we see God’s great plan. The whole aim of stewardship is to train men in sonship to God. As an earthly father trains his child, trusting responsibility to him more and more, trying to get the son to understand and follow his aims in the

development of character, the use of time and property, so God is training us. God wants to share everything with us. Sonship is not something to be greedily grasped at. We must follow the way of Jesus Christ. 'Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus : who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death on the Cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him. . . .' (Phil. ii. 5-9). Christ 'in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered ; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation.' (Hebrews v. 7-9). To as many as receive him to them he gives the right to become children of God. (Cf. John i. 11). So, as did our master, we go about our Father's business, realizing that we are His children. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling knowing that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to work according to his good pleasure. (Phil. ii. 12-13). In engaging in this, the highest possible aim, we are, as Paul says he was, stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Cor. iv. 1).

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What are the duties of stewardship in the following cases :—wives, husbands, children, parents ? (Cf. Eph. v. 22-vi. 9).
2. Read Paul's First Epistle to Timothy. What are the stewardship duties of Church elders and deacons ? (Remember there were no bishops as we know them in Paul's day. Timothy was a pastor of a congregation and the elders of the congregation were called bishops).

